



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION Wednesday, November 6, 2002 for the purpose of receiving an update on the Roosevelt Center Marketing Study.**

The meeting began at 7:40 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members, Alan Turnbull and Edward V.J. Putens and Mayor Pro Tem Rodney M. Roberts.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; and Nicole DeWald, Arts Coordinator.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Pete Carney, Janet Goldberg and Joe Nathanson, Urban Information Associates; Gwen Vaccaro, Joe Natoli, Cindy Comproni, Dorrie Bates, Bob Davis, Ray Stevens, Louis Parker, Cory Haung, Merchants; Judy Bell, News Review and Dan Genz, Washington Post.

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts welcomed everyone. Mr. McLaughlin noted that the purpose of the meeting was to review three components of the market study for Roosevelt Center: retail sale analysis, demographics of the trade area, and constraints to business retention and attraction.

Mr. Nathanson began by summarizing the initial work session and other meetings with the Roosevelt Center merchants. He also discussed a special meeting with representatives of arts and cultural organizations. He noted that his firm had done an analysis of the local market, a focus group with NASA, and a shopper intercept survey with clients.

Mr. Nathanson elaborated on the intercept survey of Roosevelt Center users. He noted it was performed late June through early July and was done during day, evening, and weekend hours. He said 100 people were interviewed.

He reported that merchants indicated 80% of customers were from old Greenbelt. The intercept survey also revealed that 75% of shoppers were from old Greenbelt. He also noted that about half of respondents had walked and the other half had driven. Mr. Nathanson provided a list of suggestions that respondents had made regarding additional tenant uses and physical improvements.

Ms. Goldberg summarized sales figures in the primary trade area (old Greenbelt) for the major components of Roosevelt Center. She noted that there was an outflow of funds, with no significant inflows. Ms. Goldberg provided data on potential additional square footage that could be supported at Roosevelt Center.

Mr. Nathanson summarized the development obstacles and opportunities. He noted that the market was limited to Greenbelt. Beltway Plaza and Greenway Center compete with Roosevelt Center. The bank branch closing was identified as a problem. The consolidation of the existing post office space following the opening of the new facility in Greenbelt East was discussed as an opportunity. He stressed the unique situation of Roosevelt Center including its history, customer loyalty, nearby City facilities, etc. Mr. Nathanson stressed the unique role that the Greenbelt theater plays at Roosevelt Center.

Mr. Carney explained that 50-60% of theater clients were coming from outside the area. He summarized the major reasons that the theater could draw clients from outside the local geographic area. He also reported on some of the national trends in the theater industry. Mr. Carney presented data from the Greenbelt theater as well as other theaters including Academy 14, other regional theaters, other single screen theaters and other art screen theaters.

Next, there was discussion of how to better market the Roosevelt Center. Mr. Nathanson made suggestions about signage locations, including the approaches to the City along major roadways and possible signage at the Metro station. He also suggested that brochures or marketing materials be placed at NASA and other major employment sites. Several merchants stressed that more signage was needed.

Mr. Nathanson summarized the physical improvement possibilities. He suggested elimination of plastic outdoor furniture. He suggested more color is needed through landscaping changes or new activities. He suggested regular cleaning and reducing the window clutter. He suggested the idea of a business improvement district.

He noted possible improvements to the store and services mix. This included adding retail books, flowers, clothing, hardware, organic foods, etc. Restaurant opportunities included ethnic restaurants, ice cream parlor, nightclub, brew pub and bar. Added services such as bank, shoe repair, and veterinarian were suggested. The need for maintaining a post office presence was stressed. Mr. Nathanson specifically stressed the need for active management by the principal landlord.

Mr. Nathanson highlighted some ideas for new or augmented activities. These included: the establishment of a farmer's market, possibly working with the Coop and the Department of Agriculture; programming more arts and entertainment activities; seasonal merchandising; and the use of push carts as business incubators.

Mr. Carney provided recommendations on how the theater operation can be improved. He noted that physical improvements were needed. He suggested changing the name of the "Old Greenbelt Theatre." He believed the theater should be promoted more during major events such as the Labor Day Festival. He further encouraged the local arts groups to create events and work together. Finally, he stressed the need for the Friends of the Old Greenbelt Theatre to continue its work.

Mr. Nathanson suggested some public safety improvements including: a visible and sustained police presence; augmentation of police presence with private security; reactivation of security cameras; posting a code of conduct; and investigating opportunities for young people to congregate elsewhere.

Mr. Nathanson presented several marketing and promotion ideas including: a merchants' association cooperative marketing effort; materials to promote the Center; and a welcoming package. He also stressed that a merchants' association with a budget is needed. He suggested a staffing presence at Roosevelt Center that could work on marketing, promotion, leasing, etc.

Mr. Turnbull suggested that the City retain the consultants for a "command performance" by televising the presentation on the City's cable channel. Mr. McLaughlin suggested that the consultants could accomplish this when they present the final report. Mr. Putens noted that a videotaped presentation could be replayed repeatedly on the City's cable channel.

Ms. Vaccaro stated that there was too much emphasis on the Old Greenbelt Theatre. She stressed that there was a noise conflict between her business and the theater.

The meeting ended at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Moran

Assistant to the City Manager